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Conservation Commission Minutes 04/02/2009

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
APRIL 2, 2009

Mr. Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m. in the second floor conference room of the Town Hall Annex. Present were Nathaniel Stevens, David White, William O'Rourke, Ellen Reed, Ezra Benjamin, Charles Tirone and Catherine Garnett of the Commission. Brian Thomas, applying for Associate membership, was also in attendance. Also present were Michelle Hassler, Cemetery Commission, Leslie Mayer, Clarissa Rowe, Phil Henry, Curt Young, Michael Joyce and Craig Gallager.

7:45 p.m. - COMMISSION BUSINESS

O'Rourke/Tirone motioned to approve the 3/19 minutes; motion passed unanimously.

Michelle Hassler described a new idea of Green Burials to the board. Possibly this option could be used in the G-G section at Mt. Pleasant which is closest to the wetland where there is a high groundwater table. The practice might include new biodegradable materials (paper mache, cardboard, wood with no hardware, ceramic) for caskets and wrappings (cotton), the remains are not embalmed and the site is reused after 20-25 years. The use of the concrete vaults are still being discussed. One idea is to use the vault upside down to allow the remains to "return to the earth". The high water table is problematic. Cremains (cremated remains) are only buried 2-3ft deep. These can also be placed in biodegradable urns or vessels. The Commission asked questions about decomposition and will there be an increased nutrient load and how does the water table effect this. Ms. Reed would look into this question, as they had similar problems in New Orleans after Katrina hit.

Leslie Mayer and Clarissa Rowe presented the current version of the Green Dog program to the board. There are currently three fenced dog parks included in the proposal at the request of the Town Manager. The first is Thorndike field, within the Buffer Zone of the cattail marsh. The second is in the upper wooded basin at Menotomy Rocks park. The third is at McClellan park on the back side of the hill behind the baseball diamond, and is within the Buffer Zone and Riverfront Area of Reed's Brook.

While this is a 1-year trial program, two locations would get permanent fencing and temporary fencing might be utilized in other locations. Park Rangers would be paid to monitor the sites through increased dog license fees. A local organization, Arlington Dog Owners Group, ADOG is also fundraising for this effort. There are 14 sites in all, others include off-leashed areas only for morning hours. One of these is at Magnolia Field near the basketball courts.

The fenced dog parks would eventually lose their grass and need gravel installed. Dog owners are still responsible for picking up after their dogs, if there is non-compliance on this then the dog park could be closed or the DPW or Park Department called to clean it up.

A concern was expressed that the McClellan Park site would be in danger of increased erosion, which is already present.

Ms. Garnett expressed her opinion that fenced dog parks are not good for areas near wetlands and resource areas because of increase pollutant loads (nutrients in waste and soil compaction due to concentrated foot traffic) and they do not get properly maintained.

Ms. Reed agrees with Ms. Garnett.

Ms. Rowe asked if the board would approve the proposal in general, noting that if Town Meeting adopts the pilot program that they would return to get formal permits for any work within the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission.

Benjamin/Tirone motioned to support the concept plan; motion passed with Ms. Reed voting against and Ms. Garnett abstaining.

8pm – NOTICE OF INTENT – 837 MASSACHUSETTS AVE – CVS

Mr. Young presented the project to redevelop the old Hodgen-Noyes car dealership into a CVS pharmacy. The existing wooden house would remain on the front of the lot and be used as housing, retail or office space.

The site has outer Riverfront Area to the Mill Brook at the very back end of the lot. This area is heavily wooded with non-native vegetation on a steep slope that currently is heavily covered in trash.

The proposal includes stormwater BMPs that include a raingarden with sub-drain outlet, an infiltration system and a water-quality inlet. The site erosion control will consist of wattle berms instead of strawbales. The impacts to Riverfront will be offset by replanting the rear corner of the lot with native species. The trash against the back fence will be removed, leaving the existing fence in place. The Commission is welcome to condition the continued trash removal along the rear lot line.

The proposed landscaping plan will comprise 28% of the entire lot. The plants are not all native species but are at least not invasive plant species.

The snow storage and disposal area will take place in the rain garden, where access is possible via small bobcat.

The board asked for the water table information for the infiltration system, the hazardous waste investigation (due to site history) and to go see the site (each member will go to the site on their own, as it's open).

O'Rourke/Benjamin motioned to continue the hearing, with the applicant's consent.

8:30pm – DISCUSSION – 70 BOW ST

Mr. Gallagher came to discuss the placement of gravel for additional parking at his landscaping business at the former Security Fence building. He installed 4 inches of crushed stone in an area 40ft by 30ft next to street. It will be used occasionally for additional staff parking and truck parking. The location is the former storage area for the fence company. The site did formerly have grass on it but presently was dirt. The Commission gave him permission to complete the work as maintenance.

Mr. Gallagher was informed that the entire lot is within 100 feet of Noname Brook (Geri's Brook) and therefore he needs to obtain permission prior to any exterior site improvements. Mr. Gallagher thought that these might include the addition of stone/concrete planters on the front of the building to improve aesthetics/aesthetics.

He will compose a site plan of these improvements.

COMMISSION BUSINESS (cont.)

The Commission discussed the ongoing need for a letter to 78 Bow St, the Taylor Rental company. The erosion controls at the site were in a deteriorated condition. Mr. Stevens will draft a letter requesting attendance at a future Commission meeting; Mr. White will compose a Notice of Noncompliance (NON) letter from the Commission take some photographs.

Mr. Tirone reported on work at 40-42 Brattle St, the townhouses. The stormdrain under the bikepath bridge is blocked and needs to be cleaned up.

Mr. Tirone also reported on the work at the MWRA Brattle pump station. The barrier around the large Beech tree needs to be reinstalled. The stockpile near Mill Brook needs to be moved back from the erosion control line. The hose going to Mill Brook needs to be removed. The silt near the haybales needs to be cleaned up. The silt sacks in the drain near the Beech tree needs to be cleaned as well as the two silt sacks in Brattle St.

Mr. Tirone and Mr. White conducted a site walk to 995 Massachusetts Ave, Mill Brook Condos, (DEP File No. 91-197) to inspect erosion controls for the start of work on 3/22/09 to repair the bank to Mill Brook. The site supervisor was responsive to their concerns and immediately installed protection around one tree. Ms. Beckwith also held a site walk on 4/1/09 and observed the crib wall in construction and the in-stream erosion controls.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Corinna Beckwith
Administrator